

PEF/EnCon Commuter Benefits Proposal

Objective:

To reduce CO₂ greenhouse gas emissions and other air pollutants, oil consumption, parking demand and road congestion; to encourage smart growth and provide local economic benefits.

Proposal:

- 1) The state of New York would offer commuter benefits to all eligible state employees statewide. Commuter benefits include telecommuting, transit subsidies, compressed work week, pre-tax dollars for transit costs, rideshare matching and incentives, flex hours, etc.
- 2) New York State would actively support and cooperate with the US Environmental Protection Agency's Best Workplaces for Commuters program which encourages public and private sector employers to offer commuter benefits to their employees.
- 3) New York State would enact state tax incentives to encourage employers to provide commuter benefits. i.e. Tax incentives for transit use, companies who allow telecommuting, the purchasing of rideshare matching software.

Justification:

The offering of commuter benefits would surpass former Governor Pataki's "Comprehensive Plan to Cut New York's Dependence on Imported Energy" and provide a new strategy for reducing CO₂ greenhouse gas emissions and other air pollutants. In an energy crisis, energy conservation becomes the primary strategy. Commuter benefits are the most expedient and effective way to address the energy crisis, especially in the transportation sector. They can help reduce greenhouse gas and other harmful emissions; reduce parking demand, congestion and our dependence on foreign oil; contribute to smart growth planning and provide local economic benefits. The transportation sector is one of the largest contributors to global warming and we are in dire need of new ways to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Commuter benefits can be implemented almost immediately, do not face legal or political resistance like laws and regulations, are very popular with voters, and they have been proven to significantly reduce air pollution and fuel consumption. Commuter benefits not only save employees money, they reduce their commute times and stress, increase time at home with their families and, consequently, have a significant positive effect on the quality of their lives.

The DEC Bus Subsidy Program, Downtown Albany BID Commuter Ca\$h Program and the Cornell University Comprehensive Transportation Plan reports are available upon request. These reports help document the effectiveness of commuter benefits.